



Civic Engagement

An Update on Civic Engagement in the National Park Service

The Northeast Region is committed to building a seamless network of parks that embraces civic engagement as the essential framework and foundation for creating plans and developing programs in national parks. This newsletter, which is the second in a series of regular updates, describes the key activities by the Northeast Region of the NPS to promote civic engagement.

INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF HISTORIC SITE MUSEUMS OF CONSCIENCE 2003 CONFERENCE

THE POCAANTICO CONFERENCE CENTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND

From July 24-29, 2003, the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience convened at the Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

The Coalition was founded in 1999 by leaders of nine historic sites from around the world, including the Northeast Region of the National Park Service represented by Marie Rust. Founding members signed the following declaration: "We hold in common the belief that it is the obligation of historic sites to assist the public in drawing connections between the history of our site and its contemporary implications. We view stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function."

Fourteen path-breaking historic sites came together to plan how historic sites can serve as centers for truth seeking, reconciliation, and civic engagement: the District Six Museum (South Africa); Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (USA); Gulag Museum (Russia); Japanese American National Museum (USA); Liberation War Museum; (Bangladesh); Lower East Side Tenement Museum (USA); Maison Des Esclaves

(Senegal); Martin Luther King National Historical Site (USA); Memoria Abierta (Argentina); National Civil Rights Museum (USA); Terezin Memorial (Czech Republic); Women's Rights National Historical Park (USA); and the Workhouse (United Kingdom).

"September 11th really taught us about the role that heritage sites can play in building a lasting peace and elevating human dignity. We are looking at the Coalition's approach to preservation of our cultural heritage as a metaphor for the entire process of democracy."

Gustavo Araoz, US National Committee, International Council on Monuments and Sites

The goal is to transform historic site museums from places of passive learning to places of active citizen engagement. We seek to use the history of what happened at our sites - whether it was a genocide, a violation of civil rights, or a triumph of democracy - as the foundation for dialogue about how and

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Community map at District Six Museum in South Africa.

National Park Service Director Commits to Civic Engagement Through New Director's Orders

The NPS commitment to civic engagement is being formalized in Director's Order #75A, "Civic Engagement and Public Involvement," which directs all National Park Service units and offices to "embrace civic engagement as the essential foundation and framework for creating plans and developing programs." Laying out the purposes and background of the initiative, the document maps out the scope of the directive and introduces eleven policies through which it will be enacted.

In adopting civic engagement as agency policy, the NPS is making a commitment to involve individuals in its planning, programs, and decisions. Public involvement is to be sought sincerely, openly, and in the initial planning stages of NPS projects,

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Visitors engage in dialogue in the Levine Parlor at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, USA

where these issues are alive today, and about what can be done to address them.

Goals of the 2003 Conference

1. Strengthen the capacity of historic sites around the world to serve as effective centers for democratic dialogue on sensitive contemporary issues;
2. Deepen the partnerships and collaborations between historic sites and organizations promoting democracy;
3. Increase the number and diversity of historic sites committed to serving as centers for dialogue, in terms of geography, issues, time periods, and resources;
4. Ensure future growth and support for historic sites around the world to serve as centers for addressing social issues.

Transferable Practices

The 2003 meeting was structured to stimulate learning and exchange among members that would help to develop and refine each member's "Dialogue for Democracy" program design. "Dialogue for Democracy" programs are specific strategies at each historic site for engaging visitors in pressing social issues, specific to each local context and need. The meeting offered a variety of formats through which members could exchange practices, discuss the issues they faced in common, and brainstorm ways of addressing them in their programs. "Dialogues for Democracy" Workshops formed the foundation of the meeting and included a 20-25 minute presentation by historic site directors on their latest

work, 45-minute facilitated brainstorm on specific strategies the site could use to develop partnerships with human rights and social welfare organizations, enhance civic dialogue, fund raise for their project, and address historic preservation issues, demonstration dialogues," and discussion focus groups.

Participants exchanged the following innovative strategies:

-District Six Museum, South Africa: inviting former residents of a neighborhood destroyed under apartheid to mark their memories on a community map; heal and process loss by contributing oral histories; and empower young people as "history ambassadors" keeping alive the memory of forced removals for future generations.

-Lower East Side Tenement Museum, USA: preserving a historic building that served as home to generations of immigrants and telling the stories of the families who lived there, using their challenges and experiences as the starting point for public dialogues on contemporary issues of immigration, social welfare, sweatshops, and cultural identity.

-Women's Rights National Historical Park, USA: using the site of the first women's rights convention (1848) to explore the contemporary relevance of the issues discussed and educate visitors on the tactics used to attain equal rights.

Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh: using a mobile museum to travel from town to town, organizing gatherings of local civic leaders, freedom fighters, families of martyrs, and religious leaders to discuss how citizens should work together to promote democracy in Bangladesh.

-Japanese American National Museum, USA: developing youth media program called Dilemmas and Decisions, exploring fundamental issues in American democracy for the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, a new museum that aims to serve as a catalyst for dialogue and action by linking historical events and contemporary experiences.

-Martin Luther King National Historic Site, USA: inventing ways to harness the powerful emotions sparked by an exhibit of lynching photographs as fuel for a present-focused dialogue on race and moral responsibility.

-The Workhouse, United Kingdom: placing visitors in the shoes of inmates of this Victorian "solution" to poverty, brought into the present through a "What Now, What Next" exhibit that asks viewers to explore how the world is addressing issues of poverty today and what these issues mean for their lives.

Strategies were also put forth by Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, USA: Maison Des Esclaves, Senegal, Memoria Abierta, Argentina, National Civil Rights Museum, USA, and the Terezin Memorial, Czech Republic.

Obtain a Copy of the Conference Report

For a full report of the conference, including descriptions of Sites of Conscience strategies, common challenges, and common solutions, and plans for the future, visit www.sitesofconscience.org/eng/documents/Pocantico2003.pdf.

OTHER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS IN THE REGION

Telling Untold Stories: Patriots of Color

New research sponsored by the Northeast Region of the National Park Service has literally changed the face of the Battle of Bunker Hill. The popular perception of a strictly white patriot fighting force can no longer be sustained. This research, to be published as *Patriots of Color - African Americans and Native Americans at Battle Road and Bunker Hill*, is forthcoming from Eastern National.

"If the National Park Service is serious about appealing to all segments of our population, then this type of research is vitally important."

Martin Blatt, Chief of Cultural Resources/Historian, Boston National Historical Park

Patriots of Color provides a point of entry to the story of the American Revolution, a narrative of our nation's past that might otherwise have little or no resonance for African American or Native Americans. The National Park System Advisory Board report, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*, declared: "The National Park Service must ensure that the American story is told faithfully, completely, and accurately....In an age of growing cultural diversity, the service must continually ask whether the way in which it tells these stories has meaning for all our citizens."

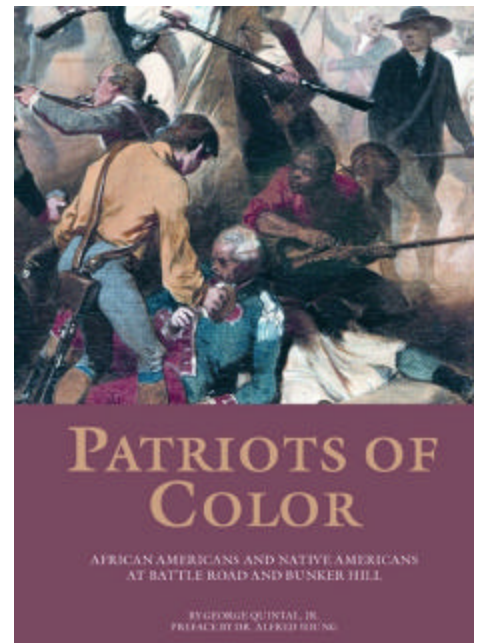
Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust has a strong, ongoing commitment to the telling of untold stories. A few years ago fund managers of the Northeast Region Cultural Resources Preservation Program decided to dedicate some resources to this specific goal. In response to an inquiry for a multi-park initiative, Boston National Historical Park partnered with Minute Man National Historical Park and crafted a research proposal that was funded. His team engaged genealogist and military researcher George Quintal, Jr., who for decades has been study-

ing patriot combatants in the Revolutionary War.

It is important to acknowledge that there has been prior research on blacks as Revolutionary War combatants, including studies by William Nell, Benjamin Quarles, and Sidney and Emma Kaplan. Recently, the *Daughters of the American Revolution* have moved in a radically different direction by publishing a report and mounting a related exhibit, "Forgotten Patriots." Still, many, probably most, white Americans and most visitors to the Bunker Hill Monument, whomever they might be, still are not familiar with the stories of the patriots of color.

Writing in the preface of the forthcoming Eastern National publication, Revolutionary War scholar Alfred Young declares: "Every once in a while a piece of scholarship comes

along that changes the way you look at a historical event...The scope of [this] research...is staggering...This clearly is a project whose time has come." Researcher Quintal pored over many sources, including muster roll and pension records. He found that 102 patriots of color participated in the battle, five times more than earlier estimates. The study provides as detailed as possible profiles of individual combatants. In order to bring the story of the patriots of color to a broad audience, Boston National Historical Park joined with The History Channel, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and several other organizations to sponsor an event on June 16, 2003, the eve of the 228th anniversary of the battle. A multi-racial audience of nearly 300 people attended the program, "Patriots of Color at the Battle of Bunker Hill," at Old South Meeting House on Boston's Freedom Trail. The evening culminated with the introduction of descendants of African American Revolutionary War combatant Barzillai Lew. "Patriots of Color" was recorded and can be accessed on line as a webcast on the WGBH Forum Network. This link can be found at www.patriotsofcolor.org. Boston National Historical Park will highlight the "Patriots of Color" research in a forthcoming permanent exhibit, "The Decisive Day: The Battle of Bunker Hill - Revolution, Monument, and Commemoration." This exhibit is scheduled



Patriots of Color, African Americans and Native Americans at Battle Road and Bunker Hill will be available January 2004.

to open in summer, 2006, in a former municipal library building across the street from the Bunker Hill Monument.

In conclusion, listen to the words of Harriet Beecher Stowe (cited in William Nell's 1855 study, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*): "In considering the services of the Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, we are to reflect on them as far more magnanimous, because rendered to a nation which did not acknowledge them as citizens and equals, and in whose interests and prosperity they had less at stake...Bravery, under such circumstances, has a peculiar beauty and merit."

Contact Eastern National at 617-242-5647 or Paul_tiemann@partner.nps.gov so that you may receive notification when this book becomes available.

The James Dexter Site: A Model for Civic Engagement at Independence NHS

James Dexter, a free African American, lived in a small house in Philadelphia that fronted on North Fifth Street approximately midway between Arch and Race Streets in the years from about 1790 until 1798. This site today lies within the boundaries of Independence National Historical Park on the third and most northerly block of

Independence Mall where the National Constitution Center is located. The redevelopment of Independence Mall called for the construction of the Independence Mall Transportation Center, a bus drop-off area, over the James Dexter site and adjacent historic lots. Once research revealed that James Dexter's house on Block 3 was the site of the founding meeting of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church, Independence NHP initiated consultation with representatives of St. Thomas Church. At this initial meeting, in October 2002, the church was informed that the James Dexter site had been identified as important in the founding of the church and that the site was slated for development. The NPS intention to preserve the archaeological site was communicated to the representatives of St. Thomas. There was, however, disagreement on the decision to preserve the James Dexter site without conducting an archeological excavation. Representatives of the church repeatedly expressed the view that excavation of the site was warranted and even necessary. At various times during the meetings this position was supported by the other community representatives present. A forceful case was made by the local community that James Dexter represents a key figure who ties together various strands of the early struggle to fashion an independent free black community in Philadelphia. His involvement in the Free African Society and the independent black church movement, as well as his ties to the abolitionist Quaker community, placed him near the center of this struggle. Therefore, it was argued that excavation of the Dexter home site was essential in attempting to bring this hidden piece of the nation's history to the fore. The NPS and the National Constitution Center always considered the Dexter site to be a significant site that warranted protection and preservation, even if that would require significant redesign of the bus drop-off. However, the NPS and NCC found the argument advanced by the representatives of the churches for excavating the site persuasive and after reevaluating the plans concluded that archeological



Community members look on as archeologists excavate the Dexter Site at Independence NHP

excavation of the site was warranted and necessary. The archeological team from Kise Straw & Kolodner began excavations on February 25, 2003 with site clearing and a commemorative ceremony presided over by Father Shaw of St. Thomas Church and Reverend Leath of Mother Bethel Church. A platform was constructed to allow the public to view the excavation and archeologists were available to discuss the process and findings. Over 300 visitors stopped to observe the during the ten days that archeologists excavated the site

The Dexter Site is an excellent example of how a park can work closely with communities to arrive at meaningful approaches to research and preservation at historic sites. In other similar situations the NPS, acting as the sole decision-maker, might choose a strictly preservation option for such an archeological site. INDE's engagement with community members from St Thomas and Mother Bethel Church, however, allowed other points of view to help shape the final decision to excavate.

Hampton's Preserving Memory Seminar Spurs Dialogue on Interpreting Slavery

The Preserving Memory seminars have been well-received throughout the region

and have generated provocative discourse among the participants. (For more information on the Preserving Memory seminars, download the April 2003 Civic Engagement Newsletter from www.nps.gov/nero/civic) The discussion-based seminars began in FY02 and are designed to explore the issues and dilemmas that arise in presenting history in public. In July, a Preserving Memory seminar was held at Hampton NHS, co-led by Professor Ed Linenthal of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and Professor James Horton of George Washington University. Hampton, which manages the core, including a large Georgian mansion and standing slave quarters, of a vast slave-holding estate, is completing a General Management Plan that will estab-

lish a management direction for the park.

Participants included park interpretation and resource management staff, members of the park's key friend's group, Historic Hampton, Inc, and staff from Sotterly Plantation, another Maryland historic site that manages standing slave quarters and interprets slavery. Readings from the first and second days, which included essays about the failed Enola Gay exhibit and the making of the Holocaust Museum, elicited much discussion about the challenges and pitfalls of interpreting sensitive or controversial stories at public sites. Discussions between Hampton park staff and Sotterly Plantation staff provided critical insights into the conflicts that arise specifically from interpreting slavery. Both Hampton and Sotterly staff shared stories of successful and unsuccessful approaches. One dilemma expressed by both Hampton and Sotterly was the awkward feelings of white interpreters expressing stories of slavery to the public. The seminar was extremely valuable to the park, who continued internal discussions about how the seminar principles could be applied to park programs and projects, such as their National Register nomination. In addition, the park continued discussions with Dr Jim Horton about holding a follow-up community workshop that deals specifically with interpreting slavery.



Standing slave quarters at Hampton NHS provide an excellent opportunity for initiating a civic discussion about interpreting complex or controversial stories at historic sites.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY, TOOLS, AND TRAINING

National Park Service Director Commits to Civic Engagement Through New Director's Orders (continued from page 1)

not merely as a concession to the law, but rather as a valued source of advice, input or caution.



Director Mainella commits NPS to Civic Engagement through Director's Orders 75A.

The Director's Order reinforces the centrality of the principles of civic engagement to NPS mission. Superintendents, regional directors, program managers, and agency staff at all levels are invited to initiate the kind of dialogue with the public that will increase the role of the NPS in helping to maintain a healthy civic society.

A copy of the Draft Director's Orders can be found at

<http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/75A.htm>

Community Tool Box

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program has developed a Community Tool Box for working in and with communities to accomplish shared goals. Focused on the nuts and bolts of improving communication and increasing community involvement, it offers practical suggestions for conducting meetings, convening task forces, and soliciting public input. Many of the strategies and techniques outlined are immediately relevant to the practice of civic engagement, such as active listening, dialogue, consensus building, and the utilization of "open space" as a meeting technique. The toolkit also provides advice on cultivating partnerships, working with stakeholder groups, involving the community in the process of creating a vision. For more information on the tool box, visit the Northeast Region's website at <http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/index.htm>

Facing History and Ourselves

Recently, park staff from Lowell National Historical Park attended the "Greater Boston Community Workshop" presented by the organization "Facing History and Ourselves." This organization, which pres-

ents a range of trainings and workshops nationally, is based in the belief that educating a democracy must be what Alexis de Tocqueville called "an apprenticeship in liberty." *Facing History* helps its participants find meaning in the past and recognize the need for civic involvement and responsible decision-making. Themes of the *Facing History* workshops are typically related to issues of identity, membership, race and class. The theme for the Boston workshop was: How does the past influence the way we view ourselves and others? Using journaling, discussion and videos, the group examined race, community and national identity. The group looked at artifacts from the 1904 St Louis World's Fair to provoke discussions about the curatorial voice, the meaning in artifacts, and how we choose to exhibit stories and ourselves.

Lowell staff found that *Facing History* offers opportunities to explore the critical issues of interpreting stories at historic sites and in dealing with controversial topics. For more information on *Facing History and Ourselves*, visit their website at <http://www.facing.org>.

Civic Engagement - isn't this just a new name for public involvement?

Since the Civic Engagement Initiative was launched in December 2001, many questions have emerged about how Civic Engagement differs from public involvement, a process that has long been at the center of NPS planning. *Civic Engagement* at its heart is a formal commitment to building long-term, sustained relationships between diverse communities and national parks that goes well beyond the planning process. *Public involvement* includes techniques of reaching out to communities and is a legal requirement of many of our planning processes. Examples of rich relationships between communities and parks exist that precede the Civic Engagement Initiative. But more typically public involvement is prescriptive and ends once a plan is finalized. Civic engagement reinforces the importance of building communities as ongoing, decision-making partners in resource preservation, interpretation and education.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The Civic Engagement Newsletter is a publication of the Northeast Region.

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Websites for Reference:

National Park Service Civic Engagement Website contains case studies, workshop information, and interactive tools (<http://www.nps.gov/civic>)

American Association of Museums is a resource exploring the engagement between American communities and their museums. (<http://www.aam-us.org/initiatives/m&c/index.cfm>)

Pew Partnerships Civic Engagement Program contains information about research and analysis on the involvement of citizens in civic life. (<http://www.pew-partnership.org/programs/civicEngagement/index.html>)

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) contains information pertinent to President Bush's *We the People Special Initiative* aimed at strengthening the American people's knowledge of their history. (<http://www.neh.fed.us/whoweare/wtp-budget2004.html>)

2003-2004 Schedule of Events

Preserving Memory Seminars

Oct 21-23, 2003	Preserving Memory for Planners
Dec 9-11, 2003	Sagamore Hill National Historic Site.
March 2004	Lowell National Historical Park
July 2004	New River Gorge National River

Workshops and Meetings

Oct 30, 2003	Civic Engagement Strategic Planning Session: Marsh Billings Rockefeller NHS
April 2004	Great Places, Great Debates, New York City
May 2005	African Americans and the Civil War, Petersburg, Virginia

Other Planned Activities

November 2003	Sessions at Ranger Rendezvous, November 2003
November 2003	Sessions at Joint Ventures Partnership Conference, Los Angeles

Contributors to the November Issue of Civic Engagement include:

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